United Nations ST/IC/2008/38

Secretariat

15 July 2008

Information circular*

To: Members of the staff

From: The Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management

Subject: **2008 competitive examination for English-language editors and translators/précis-writers**

1. The purpose of the present information circular is to invite applications from staff members of the Secretariat at the P-3 level and below who wish to take one or more of the following competitive examinations in 2008, in accordance with the provisions of ST/AI/1998/7 and ST/AI/2000/1, as amended by ST/AI/2003/1:

(a) Competitive examination for English-language editors;

(b) Competitive examination for English-language translators/précis-writers.

2. The competitive examinations for English-language editors and translators/précis-writers will be held tentatively on **15 and 16 October 2008**, respectively, in New York, Geneva, Vienna and other locations according to the number and location of qualified candidates convoked for the examination. The purpose of these examinations is to establish rosters from which present and future vacancies for English-language editors and translators/précis-writers will be filled. When vacancies occur in a service, successful candidates will be recruited from the roster for that service, subject to the requirements of the service in terms of expertise and language combinations.

3. The examinations are open to staff members of the United Nations at the P-3 level and below who meet the eligibility requirements, as well as qualified external candidates. Staff members from subsidiary organs of the United Nations and staff members whose service is limited to a particular organ, fund or programme of the United Nations or to special missions are considered external candidates for the purpose of these examinations. Such candidates, if successful in one or more of the examinations, will be offered a new appointment with the United Nations subject to normal United Nations recruitment procedures and standards. Staff members who are successful and are selected for inclusion in one or more of the rosters will be assigned to fill vacancies for English-language posts as they occur in the language services in New York, Geneva, Vienna, Nairobi, Addis Ababa, Bangkok and

* Expiration date of the present information circular: 31 December 2008.

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Santiago. Assignments are subject to rotation and successful candidates may thereafter be called upon to serve at other United Nations duty stations according to the needs of the Organization. Successful candidates are expected to serve **a minimum of five years** in language posts. The assignment of staff members of the United Nations who are successful in the examinations and are selected to fill vacancies will be subject to the conditions set out in paragraphs 14 to 17 below.

4. Staff members of the Secretariat applying for the examination must:

(a) Have English as their main language;[1]

(b) Have a perfect command of English and an excellent knowledge of French and one of the other official languages of the United Nations (Arabic, Chinese, Russian or Spanish). The Board of Examiners, appointed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management, requires that candidates' claims to knowledge of official languages be supported by relevant documentation in their official status files. Staff members who have been enrolled in a United Nations language course in any of the languages claimed must have passed the United Nations language proficiency examination in that language. Candidates who have not attended the United Nations language courses in the languages claimed must substantiate their claims to knowledge of those languages. For that purpose, staff members should give a clear explanation on the P.11 or personal history profile (PHP) form of how they acquired their knowledge of the languages claimed;

(c) Hold at least a three-year first-level degree from a university or institution of equivalent status in which English is the language of instruction **or** hold a university degree from a recognized school of translation;

(d) Have knowledge of word-processing programs.

5. In order to meet the Organization's need to recruit staff for language posts who will serve for a reasonable period of time before reaching retirement age, staff members who do not serve on 100-series appointments and who will have reached the age of 56 by the deadline for submission of applications, 31 August 2008, will not be eligible to sit for the examination. There is no age limit for full-time staff members serving on 100-series appointments.

6. The requirement of a degree from a university or institution of equivalent status referred to in paragraph 4 (c) above may be waived for staff members who, in the judgement of the Board of Examiners, have adequate post-secondary educational qualifications from a university or institution of equivalent status and adequate secondary educational qualifications, in addition to five years of continuous service with the United Nations Secretariat by 31 December 1989.

7. All applicants should submit with their applications a one-page essay in English, explaining why they wish to work as a translator/précis-writer or editor in the United Nations. All applications will be reviewed by the Board of Examiners. In instances where a large number of applications are received, the Board reserves the right to admit to the examination only the most qualified candidates based on a review of the qualifications that are over and above the minimum criteria set out in paragraph 4. Candidates may be required to submit evidence of degrees, knowledge

[1] "Main language" should be understood to be the language in which the candidate is best able to work. Candidates' claims to English as their main language must be supported by relevant documentation in their official status files.

of languages and/or relevant experience prior to convocation. All applicants will be notified of the Board's decision in respect of their application. **The Board's decisions are final.**

8. The written editing examination, to be held on 15 October 2008, will consist of three papers:

(a) Editing of two short texts in English and completion of an exercise in English style and usage (2 hours). It should be noted that this paper is eliminatory. Only candidates who are successful in this paper will have their other papers marked;

(b) Summary in English of an Arabic, Chinese, Russian or Spanish text chosen by the candidate (1 hour and 30 minutes);

(c) Editing of a text in English to bring it into line with a text in French (2 hours).

9. The written translation and précis-writing examination, to be held on 16 October 2008, will consist of four papers:

(a) Translation into English of a general text in Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian or Spanish (2 hours). It should be noted that this paper is eliminatory. Only candidates who are successful in this paper will have their other papers marked;

(b) Translation into English of a second general text in Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian or Spanish; the language of the text chosen must be different from that of the first paper (1 hour and 30 minutes);

(c) Summary in English of a speech in French (1 hour and 30 minutes);

(d) Translation into English of one of the following: one specialized text (economic, legal or scientific/technical) from Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian or Spanish or a third general text in a language other than those chosen in (a) and (b) (1 hour and 30 minutes).

10. The use of a dictionary or any other reference material will **not** be permitted during the examination. Candidates may not use personal computers to prepare their papers. In addition, cellphones and other electronic devices may not be used in the examination room.

11. On the basis of the results of each written examination, the Board of Examiners will invite selected candidates to a competency-based interview. The Board will interview each candidate to assess whether she or he possesses the competencies required for the position. Candidates may also be required to take some additional short tests at the time of the interview (including a sight translation test). The interview is an integral part of the examination. Therefore, candidates who are invited for an interview **should not** assume that they will automatically be offered an assignment.

12. On the basis of the overall results of each examination, the Board will recommend to the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management the names of candidates who qualify for inclusion in the relevant roster. All candidates admitted to the examination will be informed in writing of the Board's final recommendation in respect of their candidature. **The Board's recommendations are not subject to appeal.** The Board **does not** release

individual scores or results. Candidates appointed to a function who have been successful in more than one examination will be eligible to transfer at a later stage to a different function for which they have also passed the examination.

13. Successful candidates who receive an offer of appointment are strongly encouraged to accept it, as declining may affect their prospects of receiving a subsequent offer.

14. Staff members selected to fill vacancies will be assigned as English-language editors or translators/précis-writers for a trial period of two years. Staff members below the P-2 level or who are in the General Service category will receive a special post allowance to the P-2 level. Staff members at the P-2 and P-3 levels will be assigned at their respective levels. Successful candidates are expected to be able to use computer workstations.

15. Successful candidates in translation assigned directly to duty stations away from Headquarters will normally be required to spend the first six months of their trial period in the corresponding service at Headquarters.

16. Staff members with a special post allowance to the P-2 level and those already at the P-2 level who complete the trial period successfully and are recommended by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Office of Human Resources Management may be promoted to the P-3 level. Staff members already at the P-3 level who complete the trial period successfully will be confirmed in their functions at the P-3 level. Staff members on fixed-term appointment will be eligible to be considered for permanent appointment subject to the requirements of the staff rules in force. Staff members who do not complete the trial period successfully will be reassigned to posts at their previous levels and the special post allowance, if any, will be discontinued.

17. In accordance with the needs of the service/section, successful candidates may be called upon to work outside normal working hours, including weekends and holidays.

18. Staff members applying for the examination should complete the attached form and submit it together with a copy of the P.11 or PHP form and the essay referred to in paragraph 7, **no later than 31 August 2008**, to:

2008 competitive examinations for English-language editors
and translators/précis-writers
Examinations and Tests Section
Office of Human Resources Management
Room S-2575
United Nations Secretariat
New York, N.Y. 10017
Fax: 1 212 963 3683
E-mail: OHRM_exam@un.org

Applications received after the deadline will not be considered. To the extent possible, applicants are strongly encouraged to submit their applications early and, preferably, by e-mail. Applications may be sent by fax or mail. Incomplete applications, including those without the essay, will **not** be considered.

19. **In order to ensure receipt of all applications submitted by staff members from offices away from Headquarters, such staff members are requested to return their applications to the Examinations and Tests Section of the Office of Human Resources Management through the Chief Administrative Officer or Director of the United Nations Information Centre of their respective duty stations by 31 August 2008, the deadline for receipt of applications in the Examinations and Tests Section.**

Application (for staff members of the United Nations Secretariat only)

2008 competitive examinations for English-language editors and translators/précis-writers

Index No. ☐☐☐☐☐☐

Last name ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ Category ☐☐ Level ☐☐

First name ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ Male ☐ Female ☐

Date of entry on duty Month ☐☐ Year ☐☐☐☐

Type of contract _____ Expiration date _____

Department/office _____ Duty station _____

Room No. _____ Tel. extension _____ Fax extension _____ E-mail _____

Have you taken this examination before? Yes ☐ Year ☐☐☐☐ No ☐

Have you taken another United Nations competitive examination? Yes ☐ Year ☐☐☐☐ No ☐

If yes, which examination(s) _____

What is your main language?[a] ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Please complete an up-to-date P.11 or PHP form and attach it to this application. Describe your educational background and work experience (giving dates and length of time) in the areas of editing and translation, if any. Also include any relevant information about computer software or programs used. Applications submitted without a P.11 or PHP form or without the one-page essay in English referred to in paragraph 7 will NOT be considered.

Please indicate the examination(s) for which you are applying. Your application will not be considered if this part of the application is not completed.

☐ (a) The competitive examination for English-language editors

☐ (b) The competitive examination for English-language translators/précis-writers

[a] "Main language" should be understood to be the language in which the candidate is best able to work. Candidates' claims to English as their main language must be supported by relevant documentation in their official status files.

I certify that the information I have provided above is correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Date _____ **Signature** _____

(When applying by e-mail, type the date and your name above.)

I have read information circular ST/IC/2008/38 and I understand that if I am successful in the 2008 competitive examination for English-language editors and/or the 2008 competitive examination for English-language translators/précis-writers and am recommended for inclusion in the relevant roster(s), my assignment as an English-language editor or translator/précis-writer will be subject to my acceptance of the conditions of service indicated in paragraphs 14 to 17 of that circular.

Date _____ **Signature** _____

(When applying by e-mail, type the date and your name above.)